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O 051430Z MAY 08
FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1735
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 000611

SIPDIS

WHA/CCA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/05/2018

TAGS: KDEM PHUM PREL EUN CU GR

SUBJECT: GREECE: STEEP UPHILL PROMOTING SOLIDARITY DAY WITH CUBAN PEOPLE

REF: A. SECSTATE 45792

¶B. SECSTATE46997

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DANIEL SPECKHARD. REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Embassy Country Team discussed possible ways to promote the May 21 "Day of Solidarity with Cuba" (refs a and b). We have informed the GOG of May 21 as the Day of Solidarity with the Cuban people and urged it to undertake its own activities to mark appropriately the occasion. Moreover, we are at levels and to fit is our view, however, that, given the political context in Greece, Embassy options are very limited. Greek opinion towards the Castro regime ranges from benign indifference to full-throated support. The population is majority leftist in terms of its party orientation and is not responsive to concerns about human rights in Cuba. Secretary General of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) Aleka Papariga is currently heading a delegation to Havana and expressed the KKE's "undivided support" to the Castro regime in its "struggle against imperialist designs." Within the center-right New Democracy government, there is greater awareness of human rights problems with the Castro regime. But Greece historically has generally supported the EU position on Cuba at the UN and in other fora, and FM Bakoyannis as a matter of principle opposes sanctions as a policy lever, preferring instead "constructive engagement."
¶3. (C) These political realities point to a desperate need to make the Greek people aware of the real situation in Cuba. At the same time, they also severely restrict our possibilities for action. We will continue to look for opportunities, both in the GOG and the Greek public, to heighten awareness of the situation in Cuba.

SPECKHARD